

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, the applicant respectfully submits that the pending claims are not anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and are not rendered obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance. If, however, the Examiner believes that there are any unresolved issues, or believes that some or all of the claims are not in condition for allowance, the applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned to schedule a telephone Examiner Interview before any further actions on the merits.

The applicant will now address each of the issues raised in the outstanding Office Action.

Objections

Claims 21 to 24 were objected to because of the second occurrence of the word "to" in line 3 of claims 21-24. These claims have been amended to delete this word in accordance with the Examiner's helpful suggestion. Accordingly, this objection to claims 21-24 should be withdrawn.

Claims 10,11,13,14,15,16,18,20,22 and 24-28 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claim 10 (amended) is a rewritten version of claim

10 (original) in independent form including all the recitations of base claim 8 (original) and intervening claim 9 (original).

Claim 11 (amended) is a rewritten version of claim 11 (original) in independent form including all the recitations of base claim 8 (original) and intervening claim 9 (original).

Claims 18, 22, and 26 depend from claim 11 (amended). Since claim 11 (amended) is now in allowable form, claims 18, 22, and 26 are also allowable by virtue of their dependency.

Claims 13 (amended) is a rewritten version of claim 13 (original) in independent form including all the recitations of base claim 8 (original) and intervening claim 9 (original).

Claims 14-16, 20, 24, and 28 depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 13 (amended). Since claim 13 (amended) is now in allowable form, claims 14-16, 20, 24, and 28 are also allowable by virtue of their dependency.

Claims 25 (amended) is a rewritten version of claim 25 (original) in independent form including all the recitations of base claim 8 (original).

Claims 27 (amended) is a rewritten version of claim 27 (original) in independent form including all the recitations of base claim 8 (original) and intervening claims 9 (original) and 12 (original).

In view of the foregoing, the objections to claims 10, 11, 13-16, 18, 20, 22 and 24-28 should be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 8, 9, 12, and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,950,022 (hereinafter referred to as "the Hagiwara patent"). The applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this ground of rejection in view of the following.

Applicant has amended independent claim 8 to recite a rotating ring which is provided on a lens barrel portion for issuing an instruction associated with focusing operation and a control section which performs control to set the instruction from the rotating ring as a switching instruction to a switching section or an instruction for focusing in a manual focus mode. This feature clearly distinguishes claim 8, as amended, over the Hagiwara patent and is not taught by the Hagiwara patent.

In claim 8, as amended, the rotating ring on the lens barrel can serve two different functions. For example, this allows the current function of the rotating ring to depend upon the current mode of operation of the camera. More specifically, when the camera is in the auto focus mode, the rotating ring can be used to provide switching instructions to the switching section, e.g. to switch the in-focus point position in the frame. When the camera is in the manual focus mode, the rotating ring can be used to provide instructions for focusing in the manual focus mode. For example, in auto focus mode, a rotation of the rotation ring may provide a switching instruction to the switching section to change the selection of the in-focus point position in the frame

from a first candidate point in the frame to a second candidate point in the frame. The auto-focus section can perform a focusing operation to readjust the focal point of the camera, e.g., move a lens, based upon the newly selected in-focus position point. In the manual focus mode, the rotation ring may, for example, by its user selected angular position, direction of rotation, and/or rotation amount provide instructions for setting the manually selected focus point of the camera. (See, e.g., page 6 lines 21 and 22 and page 23 lines 16-22 of the specification.).

This dual functionality provided in the rotating ring feature of claim 8 (as amended) eliminates the need for a specific dedicated feature on the camera for performing the task of issuing switching instructions for switching between a plurality of in-focus points while in the auto-focus mode. In addition, having the rotating ring on the lens barrel serve to issue switching instructions for switching between in-focus points, while in the auto-focus mode, improves the operability of the camera by enabling the user to hold the camera in a stable manner during operation, thus contributing to improved stability during photography.

In view of the foregoing, independent claim 8, as amended, is not anticipated by the Hagiwara patent for at least the reasons stated above. Since, claims 9 and 12 include this feature of claim 8 (amended) by virtue of their dependency, they are similarly not anticipated by the Hagiwara patent.

Claim 19 has been canceled making its rejection moot.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 7, 17, 21, and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Hagiwara patent in view of Official Notice.

The Examiner contends that the Hagiwara patent includes all the features of the original claim 7 of the present invention, except a manual focus mode. The Examiner further contends that it was well known at the time of the applicant's invention for a camera to be selectively operable in an automatic and a manual focus mode, and that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include a manual mode of focus.

Applicant has amended independent claim 7 to recite a focusing rotating ring which gives an instruction for focusing in the manual focus mode, and a point switch control section which switches the selected/displayed point in accordance with rotation operation of the focusing rotating ring when control operation is performed by the selection/display control section. This feature is neither taught, nor suggested by the Hagiwara patent or the Official Notice, either taken alone or in combination.

In claim 7, as amended, the focusing rotating ring can serve two different functions. For example, this allows the current function of the focusing rotating ring to depend upon the current mode of operation of the camera. More specifically, when the control operation is performed by the selection/display control section, e.g., when in auto focus mode, a rotation operation of the focusing rotating ring can cause the point switching

control section to switch the selected/displayed point. When the camera is in the manual focus mode, the focusing rotating ring can give an instruction for focusing in the manual focus mode. For example, in auto focus mode, a rotation of the focusing rotating ring may cause the point switching control section to change the selection/display of distance measurements points from a first distance measurement point to a second distance measurement point; control operations such as, e.g., movement of a lens to auto focus the camera to the newly selected second distance measurement point can be performed. While in the manual focus mode, the focusing rotating ring may, for example, by its user selected angular position, direction of rotation, and/or amount of rotation provide an instruction for setting the manually selected focus point of the camera. (See, e.g., page 6 lines 21 and 22 and page 23 lines 16-22 of the specification.)

This dual functionality supported by the focusing rotating ring feature of claim 7 (as amended) eliminates the need for a specific dedicated feature on the camera for activating switching to select and display from a plurality of distance measurement points in auto-focus mode. This feature of independent claim 7, as amended, is not taught by the Hagiwara patent. Moreover, the purportedly well known manual focus mode does not compensate for this deficiency of the Hagiwara patent with respect to claim 7, as amended.

Similarly, even assuming, argumendo, that the Hagiwara patent in view of the Official Notice teaches

all the features of the original claims 21 and 23, this does not compensate for the deficiencies of the Hagiwara patent in view of the Official Notice with respect to claim 8, as amended, from which claim 21 (amended) and claim 23 (amended) depend. Applicant has amended original independent claim 8 to recite a rotating ring which is provided on a lens barrel portion for issuing an instruction associated with focusing operation and a control section which performs control to set the instruction from the rotating ring as a switching instruction to the switching section or an instruction for focusing in a manual focus mode. This feature clearly distinguishes claim 8, as amended, over the Hagiwara patent and the Official Notice.

In view of the foregoing, dependent claims 21 (amended) and 23 (amended) are not obvious over the Hagiwara patent in view of the Official Notice, for at least the reasons stated above.

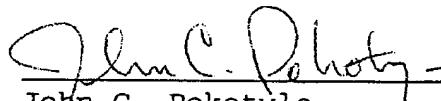
Claim 17 has been cancelled making its rejection moot.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the applicant respectfully submits that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the applicant requests that the Examiner pass this application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

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